

Nugget: January 22-23, 2011
Paul Gauche

Season Theme: Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread
How does God supply our needs? How do we learn to trust in God's provision? This will be a good "warm up" for FMSC.

Weekly Theme: Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread:
Winner, Winner Chicken Dinner

Psalm 8 ... Divine Majesty and Human Dignity ... To the leader: according to The Gittith. A Psalm of David.

¹ O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. ² Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger. ³ When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; ⁴ what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? ⁵ Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor. ⁶ You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet, ⁷ all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, ⁸ the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas. ⁹ O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

A BROAD LOOK

When the *Apollo 11* spacecraft was sent to the moon in July of 1969, many of the world's leaders had the opportunity to send along a message which was engraved on a silicon disk the size of a 50 cent piece which was left on the moon. Pope Paul VI, as the political head of the Vatican at that time, sent along the text of Psalm 8. Now, whenever we read the words from Psalm 8:3, "When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established ..." we know that at some remote part of that planet the words of this psalm reflect our wonder and praise for God who set it all in motion.

There is a mood change in Psalm 8 which sets it apart from the previous seven chapters. After two psalms of introduction and five psalms of lament and introspection, Psalm 8 launches into a strong note of awe and praise which actually begins in the last verse of Psalm 7. The phrase we've chosen to connect Psalm 8 to our present context is "Winner, Winner Chicken Dinner." Perhaps some further context would be helpful. "Winner, Winner Chicken Dinner" is a phrase that has come to be used in our current culture to convey a positive outcome of something. It's related to something like, "*Yes! We have a winner!*" Accordingly, most people agree that the phrase has its origin in Las Vegas where, as legend has it, years ago every casino in Las Vegas had a three-piece chicken dinner with a potato and a veggie for \$1.79. A standard bet in those days was \$2, therefore, when you won a bet you had enough for a chicken dinner. The moment of joy was accompanied by the phrase, "Winner, Winner Chicken Dinner."

One could, I suppose, use the word “winner” to describe humankind in our context with God. Feeling on top of the world, we exclaim with David, “*Oh Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!*” The Psalm-writer David, presumably standing somewhere outside on a clear night and looking up into the heavens was so in awe over God’s glory that he both opens and closes the song (psalm 8) with this refrain. The verses between this powerful beginning and ending (verses 1b through 8) illuminate the reasons for giving praise having to do first with the heavens (1b-3), then humankind and the universe (verse 4); then humankind and the earth (verses 4-8). The hymn Earth and all Stars comes to mind.

A CLOSER LOOK

Finger Painting in the Heavens Verse 3

Here we find that the writer has been stargazing at God’s heaven’s which are the work of God’s fingers. This is a rather poetic moment as we see the drawing of the heavens but God’s fingers next to the more rugged work of herding together sheep, oxen, beasts of the field, birds, fish, etc., by God’s hands. We are “winners” in the sense that we behold the majesty of what God has put together in the heavens.

Unremarkable Humans in a Remarkable Universe ... verse 4

“Who am I in the midst of such glory?” Job asked this same question in the midst of his deepest grief (Job 7:17). How many times have we stepped outside on a clear night and looked up at the sky and wondered about our place in such an immensely vast universe? How far does it go? Does it end? Where did it begin? Who am I? This is the question that flows from this verse. And why shouldn’t it? But David seems to know that and this verse becomes a ‘set-up’ for what’s coming: the response to our jaw-dropping wonder of the vast creation.

A Royal Jig-Saw Puzzle ... verses 4-8

At first we sense our insignificance compared to everything we see. But, “Winner, winner chicken dinner!” we discover that we are just a little lower than the angels/God. We have a place in all of this; God has created us to play a role in the vast wonder of the creation. And not only that, but David goes on to explain that we are crowned in glory and honor and given dominion over the works of God’s hands. We are royalty! We are crowned with glory and honor, we have dominion over all created things!

Royal Responsibility ...

Being given dominion over the creation does not mean that we can do whatever we want with it. To have dominion places us squarely in the role of stewards over the creation and in partnership with the One who has created all things. As royalty, we live, move and act as royals who are charged with the care of all things. Looking at another Royal Psalm, 72, we see that we are to show care and concern for the creation. Royalty shows care and concern for the weak, the powerless, the least, the last, the lost.

Royal Parallels ...

Psalm 8:3

Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger.

Matthew 21:16

¹⁶and said to him, "Do you hear what these are saying?" Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read, 'Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise for yourself?'"

Psalm 8:5-7

what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?
⁵Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor. ⁶You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet,

Hebrews 2:6-8

⁶But someone has testified somewhere, "What are human beings that you are mindful of them, or mortals, that you care for them?" ⁷You have made them for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned them with glory and honor, ⁸subjecting all things under their feet." Now in subjecting all things to them, God left nothing outside their control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to them,

Psalm 8:6

⁶You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet,

1 Corinthians 15:27

²⁷For "God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "All things are put in subjection," it is plain that this does not include the one who put all things in subjection under him.

Ephesians 1:22

²²And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church,

Preaching Possibilities ...

The message will be preached during the weekend of January 22-23, 2011 during which we will celebrate the Affirmation of Baptism. While many of our young people will be affirming their baptisms, we'll be inviting all baptized people to do the same. We'll all be affirming our baptisms.

The connection to the Feed My Starving Children effort cannot be over-stated either. Taking our cue from the last part of Psalm 8, we are royalty. And as royalty, we bear the responsibility for other. Our culture's understanding of "winning" usually comes at someone else's expense. The disciple's understanding of "winning" comes from someone else's sacrifice. The starving child in Haiti says "I am a 'winner' because of someone else's sacrifice who put this 'FMSC chicken dinner' in front of me.

As baptized followers in the Way of Jesus, the baptismal promises become the starting point for how we live out our lives as Royalty in God's creation. We have responsibility not only for the creation, but also for the Created—people in need. Our baptism is God's way of saying "You have a place in the creation! You have a purpose in the Creation! You have a responsibility for the creation and the created."